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Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Application of an intergovernmental organization for observer status with the Economic and Social Council

Letter dated 14 November 2016 from the Director-General of the World Organization for A~imal Health addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

The World Organization for Animal Health is an intergovernmental organization, established by a treaty in 1924 with a mandate from its 180 member countries to improve animal health and welfare worldwide. In the Agreement on the Application of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, which entered into force with the establishment of the World Trade Organization on 1 January 1995, the standards set by the World Organization for Animal Health are the reference point for all issues relating to animal health. The organization is responsible for ensuring the transparency of the animal disease situation worldwide, including with regard to diseases transmissible to humans, disseminating disease prevention and control methods, safeguarding the health security of world trade in animals and animal products, and ensuring food safety from the production phase.

The organization is governed by a council that convenes at least twice a year to examine technical and administrative matters and, in particular, the working programme and the proposed budget to be presented to the annual assembly of delegates.

The organization, through its Sixth Strategic Plan (2016-2020), contributes effectively to the responses to major societal challenges by adapting to change, including through risk management for the health and welfare of animals. The organization also helps to reduce risks to human health and biological risks, whether of natural, accidental or intentional origin.

To that end, the organization works with the permanent support of 311 reference laboratories and collaborating centres and 12 regional and subregional offices worldwide. The organization also works in collaboration with the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United

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Nations, in the framework of a tripartite agreement, on different priority topics, including the transport of infectious substances.

At present, a large number of samples of human and animal infectious substances are shipped daily around the world for a variety of reasons, including research and diagnosis. In the early stages of an outbreak, the rapid diagnosis of the disease can be essential to contain its spread and to limit the subsequent potential health consequences, for example, zoonoses and new emerging diseases, and major economic implications worldwide. The animal specimens need, for that reason, to be transported safely, efficiently and as quickly as possible from the place where they are collected to the place where they will be analysed.

I should be grateful if you, as President of the Economic and Social Council, would be willing to propose to the Council that the World Organization for Animal Health be considered for observer status with the Council in order to enable its participation in the meetings of the Council and its subsidiary bodies, including the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. This will enable the organization to contribute to the regular updating of the regulations for the transport of infectious substances with regard to animal specimens.

Attached are copies of the organization's constituent texts, its governing rules and a list of all 180 member countries.[1]

I thank you in advance and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

(*Signed*) Monique **Eloit**
Director-General

[1] The attachments are on file with the Secretariat and are available for consultation.